

Protection sought in condo conversion

The County Council is considering greater protections for disabled renters in the wake of plans to convert into condominiums.

State and county laws already protect elderly and physically disabled renters in condo conversions. A council bill would expand the protections to the developmentally disabled.

"We need to correct a definition of disability that is unduly narrow and has the effect of putting a number of people into jeopardy of losing their homes," said Councilman Howard A. Denis, a key sponsor.

State law requires that certain long-time renters who are disabled or elderly must be offered three-year extensions to their leases after the condo conversion.

Under county law, developers could be required to offer those renters life tenancies, as well as three-year leases to all elderly and disabled renters.

Home Properties LLC has agreed to sell the 432-unit Pavilion complex at 5901 Montrose Road to Triton Pavilion Limited Liability for \$117 million. The tentative closing date is Aug. 28.

Triton officials have said in telephone interviews that the private real estate company will honor existing lease agreements through their full terms. They also indicated their intention to comply with county law by continuing to rent to as many as 20 percent of the total tenants, provided they are seniors or handicapped.

In addition to Denis (R-Dist. 1) of Chevy Chase, the legislation is sponsored by Council President Thomas E. Perez (D-Dist. 5) of Takoma Park and Steven A. Silverman (D-At large) of Silver Spring, Michael L. Subin (D-At large) of Gaithersburg, Nancy M. Floreen (D-At large) of Garrett Park, George L. Leventhal (D-At large) of Takoma Park, Michael J. Knapp (D-Dist. 2) of Germantown and Philip M. Andrews (D-Dist. 3) of Gaithersburg.

The bill comes to public hearing and final action on Tuesday. It is crafted to take effect immediately so it will assist the Pavilion renters.

Council Notes

by Douglas Tallman

Montgomery Sheriff Raymond M. Kight said Tuesday.

The county has received four new magnetometers — worth about \$7,500 each — to help increase courthouse security for the upcoming trials.

Kight said Jo Ann Ricchiuti, administrative services coordinator for the sheriff's department, convinced the Secret Service to donate the machines as well as the training to use them.

Kight had predicted the trial would cost nearly \$500,000 in equipment upgrades to the courthouse. The donated metal detectors and other cuts have brought the estimate down to about \$350,000, Kight said.

Jobs are key

Advocates told council members greater law enforcement measures might not be the answer to choke the growth of Montgomery County gangs.

"If you have a group of flies and you swat down on them, what's going to happen? They're going to disperse," said Juan Pacheco, 28, of Falls Church, Va., who runs a program that encourages youths to leave gangs. "If suppression, prosecution and deportation didn't work in the 1980s for gangs, what makes them think it will work now that we have [many more] gang members in the country?"

Instead, Pacheco and others promoted prevention programs that would provide jobs to vulnerable families.

The county also needs an intervention program that would help youths escape life in gangs. Without one, Diego Uriburu, deputy director of Identity Inc., said his organization "feels paralyzed."

Food fight!

Leventhal has fired the first volley in a battle with food marketers, whom he believes have helped to triple obesity rates in children.

The councilman has proposed a resolution that calls on companies to meet with the county's Health and Human Services Committee to discuss marketing practices.

The resolution, which comes up for a vote Tuesday, also calls on companies to be publicly commended if they promote healthy eating and fitness to young people.

Sniper savings

The U.S. Secret Service has helped to shave about \$30,000 from the cost of trying snipers John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo,

Montgomery County is well represented at National Association of Counties conference in Honolulu.

Councilwoman Marilyn J. Praisner (D-Dist. 4) of Calverton, who has a long association with NACo, is there. Joining her are County Executive Douglas M. Duncan (D), Chief Administrative Officer Bruce F. Romer, Health and Human Services Director Carolyn W. Colvin and two members of the county's Department of Technology Services.

The county is receiving 32 awards, including honors for HHS, DTS, environmental protection and Public Works and Transportation.

Taxpayers are picking up the tab for the trip, said Duncan spokesman David S. Weaver, who could not say how much it cost.

Based on figures provided by NACo and the County Council, it appears that the cost will be around \$11,000 for the group — excluding food and other incidentals.